

"Green" no more

Bayer Environmental Science and John Deere partner to operate Green Start Academy for assistant superintendents looking to further their careers

by Heather Wood

Justin Peloquin learned about bentgrass and Bermudagrass in college, but only recently did he learn what it really takes to be a golf course superintendent or assistant superintendent.

"It's not just growing grass," says Peloquin, assistant superintendent at La Quinta Resort & Club in Palm Desert, Calif., of the job. "You have to have good financial, public relations and human resource skills."

This is one of the reasons the Green Start Academy was formed. Bayer Environmental Science and John Deere have teamed up to present the program for aspiring assistant golf course superintendents who want to further their skills and network with colleagues.

A maximum of 50 applicants will be accepted into the inaugural program, which will be held Sept. 27-28 at the Bayer Environmental Science Training and Development Center in Clayton, N.C., and John Deere's Turf Care Factory in Fuquay-Varina, N.C. Education sessions, a tour of the John Deere factory and an evening of entertainment are on the academy's syllabus.

"We wanted to be able to help assistant superintendents who want to further their careers," says Matt Armbrister, segment manager at John Deere's golf and turf group and one of the lead organizers of Green Start Academy. "When you have

somebody who has a willingness to commit to their career, it's crazy for us not to assist them to get to a higher level."

The golf course management industry can be competitive, and the two companies want to help those who are committed to their careers, Armbrister adds.

Aaron Wells is one of those assistant superintendents who is committed to his career. He started working on a golf course when he was too young to drive and now has been an assistant superintendent for seven years. Currently, he works at Belmont Country Club in Ashburn, Va.

Because there are fewer golf courses in cooler, northern climates, there are less top positions available, and thus, more competition, Wells says. He remains positive about his chances of advancing, though.

"I've been an assistant for quite a few years, and I do a lot of the things that a superintendent does at other courses," Wells says. "I'm just waiting for the right opportunity to advance to the superintendent role."

Still, having a program like the Green Start Academy on his resume couldn't hurt, Wells says.

"I would be interested in seeing how my skills would compare to other assistant superintendents' skills," he says. "I don't think there are any other programs like that out there."

Todd Marten, an assistant golf course

superintendent at Pine Hills Country Club in Sheboygan, Wis., agrees that networking is an important tool.

"It's good to be able to sit with other superintendents or others in the business and talk about our experiences," Marten

Green Start Academy

Networking and education for assistant golf course superintendents. As many as 50 golf course superintendents will be chosen. Sept. 27-28, 2006

Clayton and Fuquay-Varina, N.C.
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says. "You learn a lot that way.

"Just being in the group of assistants can be an accomplishment today," he adds. "It seems like there's not as many jobs to go around as there used to be."

Meeting with colleagues always has paid off for Peloquin. People he has met through various professional channels have remembered him years later.

"It can never hurt to network," he says. "Anything you can do to get your name out there in the industry is a plus."

Interested assistant superintendents need to be recommended by a superintendent and must write an essay. Entrants will be judged by a panel of golf course superintendents. For more information, visit www.johndeere.com/academy.

